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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [SCUL](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD EPRT ENGAGES SHIA SHEIKHS ON FIGHTING JAM,
PROTECTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Classified By: EPRT Leader Eric Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (U) This is a Baghdad 2 BCT EPRT reporting cable.

12. (C) Summary: Shia tribal leaders in the 9 Nissan district of Baghdad told EPRT Team Leader and Brigade Combat Team (BCT) Leader that Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM) threatened many of the district's residents, and the people needed protection by Coalition Forces (CF). The Sheikhs said that unemployed young men are susceptible to JAM recruitment, which limits the power of tribal leaders. EPRT Leader discussed EPRT functions, and noted that many of Iraq's neighbors are not supporting a strong, unified Iraq. BCT Leader underscored the importance of combining efforts for security to permit infrastructure projects to continue. Participants agreed to meet regularly, and to continue District Council (DC) meetings. End summary.

Sheikhs, DC Members, NP Come to Discuss Security Issues

13. (C) A group of 9 Nissan sheikhs, including District Council Chair Sheikh Kamal Joda Al-Khamaasi, 9 Nissan Deputy Qa'im Makam and DC member Esam Al-Timimi, District Council member Sheikh Latif, and tribal council chief Sheikh Faris Al-Timimi, and Iraqi National Police Brigadier General Flaah Hasson Ammer (sensitive - protect) visited FOB Loyalty on June 26 to discuss urgent security issues with Brigade Commander Col. Bannister and EPRT Team Leader Whitaker. Col. Bannister emphasized the need to continue holding regular meetings to permit ongoing interaction between E-PRT, Civil Support Teams, battalion officers, and district leaders. He cited the 19 security events of the previous day, noting that 17 had taken place in 9 Nissan, and underscored the importance of moving forward to a mutually satisfactory approach. The brigade has cut off counter-fire unless the Aerostat shows that the target area is clear, and has cut off night helicopter attacks. Even so, the militants are placing IEDs in the muhallahs (neighborhoods).

Timimi: Militias in Control, People Need Security

14. (C) DC Member Timimi said that terrorists in 9 Nissan are more powerful than they were in 2003, and that the solutions are not in the hands of tribal leaders. Militias control everyone, he said, and constantly issue threats to residents of 9 Nissan. People need more security, he stressed, arguing that we will have to devise a new plan to deal with this problem.

15. (C) Sheikh Kamal agreed, and said there were no laws that could protect the ISF from militia members. At a checkpoint, the ISF does not have the power to stop them. If the ISF

shoots a militia member, the member's family demands compensation. "We need jobs for our young men," Kamal said, as the militias are paying them money to join them and engage in attacks and plant IEDs. He explained that they can earn in five minutes working for militias what it takes a month to earn otherwise. There are disconnected groups of militias, often without leaders, and it is hard to control them.

Sheikh Al-Timimi: Tribes Cannot Control; CF Needed

¶6. (C) Sheikh Faris Al-Timimi stated that tribes no longer had the power they once did, as the city is not a village. Further CF understanding of Iraqi culture and language would be helpful. New techniques are needed, as today there were many channels for tribes. There are two kinds of people: those that choose the diplomatic way, and those that are after money, he explained. The latter fade away. We want to provide a clear picture to the Iraqi people, he said: the U.S. is here to help them, and is a liberator. Tribes cannot control everything. "There are even new militias within my own tribe," Timimi said. "We represent one area; I drive around in areas where the IEDs are and where mortars are fired from people's yards." Timimi said that his tribe has tried to engage people; many are afraid to leave their homes. "People think of themselves of being Iraqi first, and from a specific tribe second. They are looking for purpose."

¶7. (C) General Ammer concurred that stopping militias at checkpoints was a challenge. Saddam Hussein led a powerful government that permitted no opportunities for militants. The ISF is getting more forces and will improve with time, he asserted.

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Sheikh Latif Raises Questions regarding Detainees

¶8. (C) Sheikh Latif said he was a sheikh of a large tribe, and did not want to see the unqualified lead 9 Nissan. Sheikhs, however, should not be the only ones holding responsibility. Given the current security situation in 9 Nissan, there is no opportunity for Al-Qaida to establish itself, he said. On the other hand, some militants have separated themselves from JAM; they are hated by various social classes, since they attack workers. Whoever the militias are, he explained, they are more powerful than the ISF; some join the militias in order to protect themselves. Everyone should be searched at checkpoints, he argued, even Prime Minister Maliki. "Weakness makes people weak, and they (militias) will attack for money." When Latif mentioned CF detainees, General Ammer asked why he would ask Col. Bannister rather than the ISF such a question. Latif closed by asking that the CF be respectful of sheikhs who seek the release of detainees. Others picked up on this point, underscoring the importance of releasing innocent detainees.

EPRT Whitaker: Sheikhs Key; Fight Cause, Not Symptom

¶9. (C) EPRT Leader Whitaker explained the role of E-PRTs in supporting reconciliation, as well as efforts underway to promote economic growth and political development. Militant elements are infiltrating 9 Nissan from Sadr City, he said, and firing rockets and mortars at both Forward Operating Base (FOB) Loyalty and the International Zone (IZ); these activities exploit 9 Nissan and endanger its residents. Many in neighboring countries are pleased that Iraq is fighting within itself, as they do not want to see a strong neighbor. That is why many of the weapons, the EPRT Team Leader said, and all the EFPs are from Iran.

¶10. (C) Iraq is not a poor country, the Team Leader continued, and should reclaim its heritage through unity. Traditional leaders once helped their herders to get water for their cattle; today the people of 9 Nissan again need water for their own survival. Sheikhs and other traditional leaders have a role to play in gaining consensus in the community through their leadership and Shura councils. We need to treat the cause of extremism (such as unemployment and sanitation), not the symptoms (militancy). When the people are convinced their leaders are looking after their needs, the violence would subside. The CF is here for three reasons: to address sectarian and terrorist violence, train the ISF to provide security, and facilitate economic and political development efforts to restore normalcy at the level of the Iraqi family.

Trio of DC Meetings to Continue

¶11. (C) After much discussion, it was agreed that the DC meetings would continue, with the EPRT in attendance.. Although civilian-dressed E-PRT members could attend both meetings, they had to ask permission to attend the ESS meeting while at the DC meeting.

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BCT Commander: Two Clocks for Iraq at Different Speeds

¶12. (C) Col. Bannister said that there were two clocks ticking: the Iraqi clock, and Washington's clock. The problem is that the Washington clock ticks faster than the Iraqi one. The whole world is watching Iraq; last November's election in the U.S. showed that many did not want U.S. involvement in Iraq to continue. The situation is not open-ended; the opportunity is now at hand, and Iraqis need to take advantage of it. Two issues complicate the situation: Firstly, the reconciliation of JAM/Sadrists. At present, 80 percent of JAM members are for a strong Iraq, the BCT commander surmised, while the other 20 percent are criminals, rogues, or under Iranian influence. Secondly, Iranian munitions continue to impede forward momentum. Every bomb stops progress; the situation would be easier to deal with if the level of externally influenced violence were to decrease. "We share common objectives," the Commander concluded, "if we cannot talk, we cannot make progress."

¶13. (C) Sheikh Al-Timimi noted that he had no doubt of the truth in what the BCT Commander said about Iran, adding that Iraqis were caught in the middle of a conflict between the U.S. and Iran. "The militias are stronger than the population," he said, "and we need CF help." Sheikh Latif

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agreed, and said the sheikhs need help from the CF side. The BCT Commander showed the visitors an actual EFP, and suggested that perhaps he should attend a militia meeting) as he was willing to talk to anyone to gain cooperation and secure peace. He closed by offering to meet again. The sheikhs agreed that doing so would be valuable. (Note: In departing, there were several sidebars, wherein sheikhs indicated the need for further discussion and one-on-one conversations. End note.)
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